

# Socialist Review

MARANGA MAI TE HUNGA MAHI

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## Stop National's anti-worker laws!

- Tea breaks gone
- Union rights cut
- Collective agreements threatened

Unite Strikes at McD's

Fighting to choose

Treaty Settlements

US 'Pivot to Asia'





The International Socialist Organisation is a group of revolutionaries in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We are part of Te Mana movement. We are active in campaigns, protests, on campuses, and in the unions.



## Socialism

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit not human need. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

## Workers' Power

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want. Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of other classes and fighting for real workers' power – a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils. China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

## Liberation From Oppression

We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to all forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence. All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

## Revolution Not Reformism

Despite the claims of the Labour Party and Trade Union Leaders, the structures of the present parliament, army, police, and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers. There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

## Internationalism

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

## Tino Rangatiratanga

We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga. Maori capitalists and corporate Iwi leaders have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Maori. The government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Maori elite while doing little for working class Maori. Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

## Environment

Exploitation of nature is as central to capitalism as exploitation of labour. Capitalism everywhere drains the earth of its resources for the profit of the few, devastating the environment and the lives of ordinary people in the process. Climate change is transforming the earth and threatening life as we know it. To stop it, humanity must re-organise its relation to the earth. The fight for socialism, led by the working class, is at the same time a fight to create a world where human beings live sustainably with the environment.

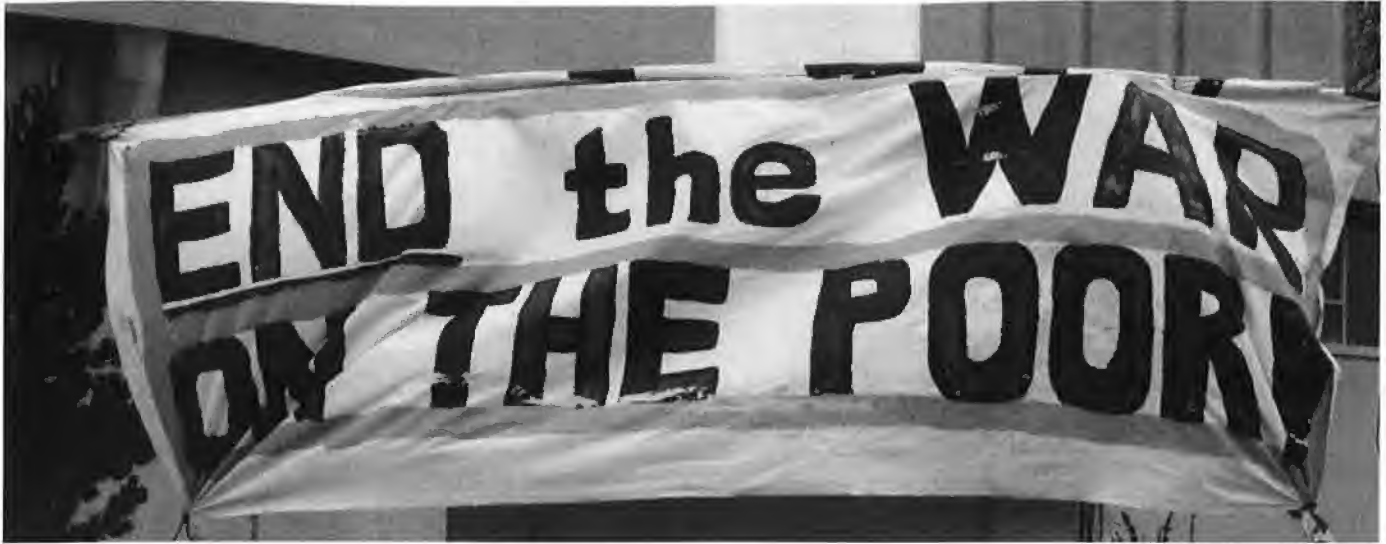
## Revolutionary Organisation

To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day-to-day activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

## Join the International Socialists

We practice what we preach, and support the working class movement whenever we can, with the long-term aim of building an organisation that can provide the working class with political leadership in times of upheaval. We currently have branches in: Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland, Poneke/Wellington, and Ōtepoti/Dunedin that meet weekly.

If you are interested in our politics and want to get involved please email us at: [contact@iso.org.nz](mailto:contact@iso.org.nz) and check out our website at: [www.iso.org.nz](http://www.iso.org.nz)



**As Socialist Review goes to press Peter Dunne's resignation dominates political coverage. Whatever the coverage of the leak, and Dunne's involvement, his resignation exposes against the unstable lash-up that is Key's government.**

For all National's popularity in the polls, they rely on a serial party-hopper and the undead ACT to govern.

Anti-union laws, the most vicious attacks since the Employment Contracts Act in 1991, went through their first reading. It's too soon to say what the union response will be, although an organized resistance, involving industrial action, is obviously what's needed. National MPs heckling over Unite in Parliament shows the parliamentary representatives of capital are class conscious, even if our side isn't fully.

We argue for a militant, class struggle approach to union organization, and have criticized the Living Wage campaign for its pleading attitude to the bosses. But we can't deny it has achieved results: both the Warehouse and Hamilton City Council have signed up to become living wage employers, earning, in the case of the Warehouse, fulsome praise from First Union. Detail, and what happens next, will be revealing, though: the Hamilton deal excludes contractors, a significant part of the council's workforce. Gains that are given from above can be taken away very easily.

The settlement Tuhoe made with the Crown was greeted with relief, and emotional scenes at Parliament. This is an iwi who never signed the Treaty of Waitangi, and who paid for their commitment to their own sovereignty in blood and loss of land. The current settlement, as John Minto pointed out on The Daily Blog, amounts to less than 1% of what was stolen.

Settlements under capitalism expose iwi to the logic of the market: millions could be lost from Tuwharetoa as its Trusts try to operate as part of capitalism.

Finally, consider the cynicism behind Key's breakfast in schools programme – a meager and charity-based substitute set up to undermine Hone Harawira's genuine feed the kids bill – the next time you see one of Fontera's propaganda pieces on TV.

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## National's New Attack on Workers



**The quality that defines workers in our class-divided world is freedom. Freedom, that is, from being encumbered with a stake in the productive system: such as ownership of companies, land, or even owning a workshop and tools for independent production. Workers do not own any of the means of economic production, nor are they owned like a slave.**

In fact, workers are so free that their only means of making living is by selling their labour power by body and brain to other people. In the selling contract workers' only bargaining power comes from combining together, and the combined group being prepared to take strike action. The alternative to those twinned elements of combination and action is to passively accept whatever terms the bosses offer. All too often the terms are the minimum necessary to secure the worker's labour power, as determined by the market rate in workers, as under-pinned by the legal minimum.

Combination without action is ineffective. Action without combination is pointless. The two parts together constitute the essence of working class power within the capitalist system. Therefore, it is no surprise that, where possible, our rulers around the world have seen to it that employment laws enacted by their governments have struck at the heart of workers' power by aiming against combination and action.

New Zealand labour laws are amongst the most repressive amongst democratic states. These latest amendments would restrict our rights even further.

### Background in History

The recent history of anti-union legislation starts with the disastrous turn to free-market politics made by the Labour government of 1984-1990. Labour's policies of privatisation and deregulation did not extend to inflicting a decisive defeat of the unions. But they may a start with their Labour Relations Act 1987. This law required unions to have a minimum of 1000 members to register as a union. This measure put paid to small unions that did not have bureaucracies and were under membership control. The law forced unions to amalgamate. The effect of the law was to strengthen bureaucratic unionism. The 1987 Act also continued earlier legal restrictions on strikes.

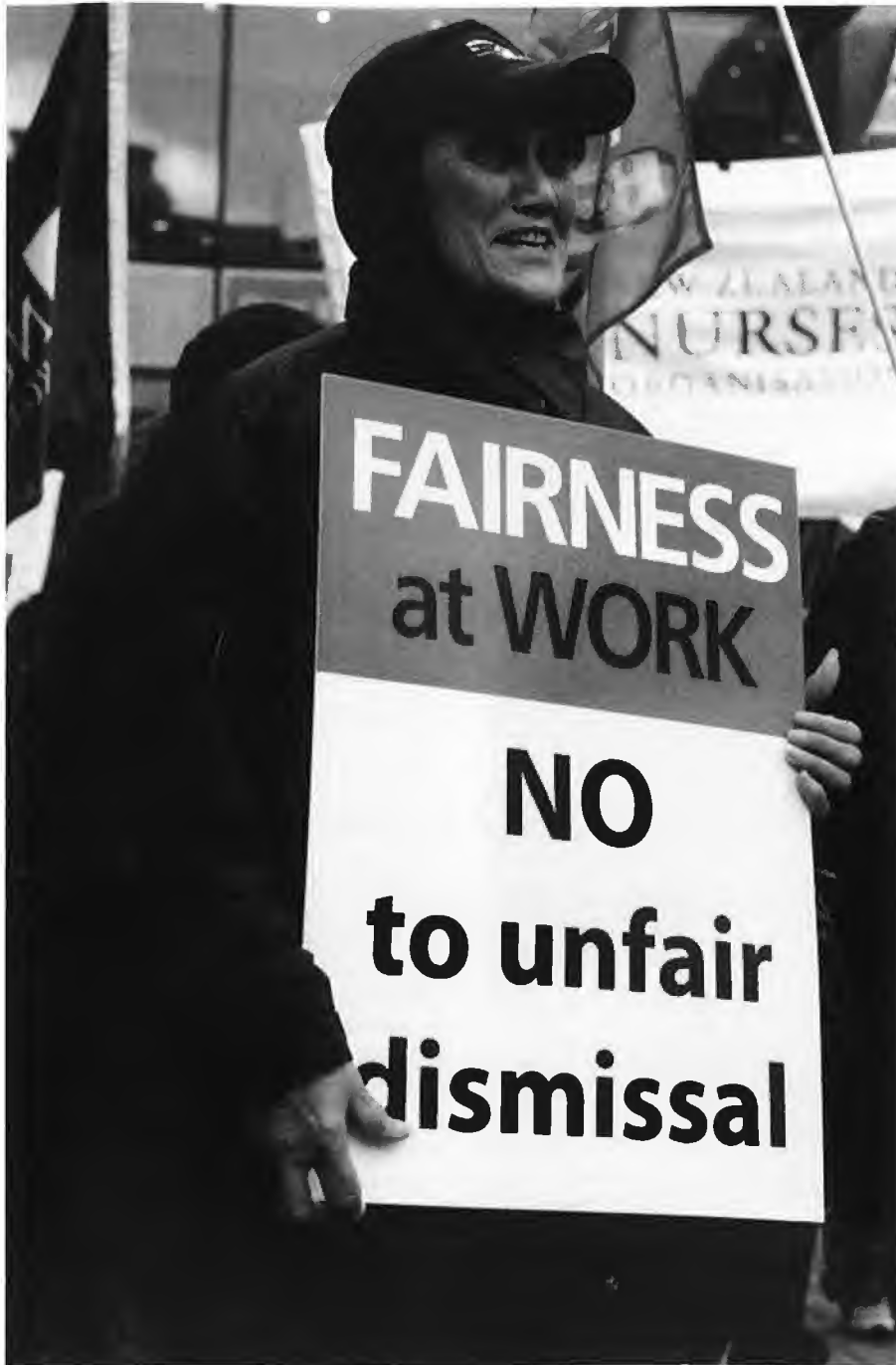
The Labour Party having prepared the ground, it fell to the succeeding National government to attack the unions head on in the shape of the Employment Contracts Act 1991. The ECA had two linked goals: to break the unions and force wages down. The ECA aimed blows at combination and action. Jane Kelsey explains in her book *The New Zealand Experiment*:

*National award coverage and compulsory unionism were abandoned in favour of individual contracts. The new employment game was to be played out on the 'level playing-field' of the labour market between the individual employer and the individual worker. Each could represent themselves, or choose their own negotiating agent. That might be a union, a private sector consultant, a lawyer or*

*almost anyone else. One worker or their agent had no right to know what another had negotiated. A contract needed to be filed with the Registrar of the Labour Court only when it covered 20 or more people, and even then it was not a public document. Contracts with state employers were excluded from the Official Information Act. Collective contracts were still allowed, but not encouraged. Even where an individual worker had authorised such negotiation, employers could not by law be compelled to negotiate a collective contract. Multi-employer contracts were even more difficult to achieve.*

Part of the attack on combination went beyond putting unions on the same terms as any other "bargaining agent". The new law could be used to make life difficult for unions. All sorts of financial and administrative hurdles were in the way of unions gaining the ability to negotiate. Sometimes, even after unions had established their authority with members, bosses could still choose to not recognise them.

# The Employment Relations Amendment Bill



The result was a catastrophic decline of collective agreements and union membership. Membership fell from 514,324 in 1991 to 375,906 in 1994, and in percentage terms it fell from 45% of the workforce in 1989 to 23.4% in 1994.

The ECA also clamped down on action. General strikes, political strikes, solidarity strikes, and strikes over all manner of workplace issues were already illegal. The ERA tightened the noose more. The only possible legal strike, other than over contract

negotiations, was when workers believed there was a threat to their health or safety.

## Employment Relations Act

On being elected again in 1999 the incoming Labour government replaced the Employment Contracts Act with the Employment Relations Act 2000 (ERA). The ERA shifted the balance back towards collective bargaining. A key

concept of the ERA was the obligation of mutual trust and confidence between unions and employers.

Whilst Labour restored the role of unions in bargaining, it proved to be worse than National on restricting workers' ability to take action. Under the ERA restrictions on strikes were taken over wholesale from the ECA. The only circumstances for a legal strike, apart from over health and safety, were in relation to bargaining after a contract had expired. Labour added other restrictions: that a strike was unlawful unless 40 days had elapsed since bargaining was initiated, and that passenger transport workers would have to give their employers advance written notice and information about intended action. The ERA took over the ECA's elastic definition of a strike to include any action that reduced output, such as a go-slow.

## Forcing a secret ballot

The ERA is still with us, although it has undergone many amendments since 2000. Amendments under Labour were generally progressive, although none loosened the restrictions on strikes. Since 2008, under Key's National-led governments, amendments have been reactionary. One of these was to make legal strikes subject to secret ballots. The secret ballot qualification is another hoop to make the unions jump through to mount a legal strike.

The amendment was passed by Parliament by just one vote in May last year. In the debate Labour and the Greens based their opposition on the argument that the amendment was unnecessary as unions already held secret ballots for strikes. No one in the parliamentary debate opposed the principle of subjecting legal strikes to secret ballots.

Not even the CTU campaigned against the secret ballot amendment. It originally supported the amendment bill, and then took the position that the amendment was unnecessary, arguing that the Bill "largely only formalises what already happens as normal procedure for unions."

Labour and the union bureaucracy may not have a problem with secret ballots for strikes, but every class-conscious worker should. There are countless examples in history when our movement has had to resist with strikes



# The Employment Relations Amendment Bill

without having held secret ballots. Reactionaries always argue that union members are intimidated by their leaders when voting by a show of hands at a union meeting. This is nonsense, but the reactionaries have reason to attack votes taken at meetings. The employing class has a deep-seated fear of workers gathering together and collectively and democratically weighing up whether to take action. If there is going to be a vote on a strike, the employers do not want the workers' representatives having the opportunity to lay out the issues for debate and give

a lead. They do not want votes taken in meetings where there is a feeling of solidarity. The delayed procedure of a secret ballot allows the bourgeois media to enter the debate and tell lies. The secret ballot is taken in isolation, out of the atmosphere of the collective and divorced from a hearing of the discussion.

The legal restrictions on industrial action, tightened increasingly with every change in employment law over decades, have been enormously damaging to the union movement. There has been a huge decline in strikes

during that period. Workers seldom exercise their power today. The impotence of unions has affected their relevance to a generation of young workers and consequently their ability to recruit. Union organisation today is patchy, and therefore so are collective agreements. The results of the ECA and the ERA, and the unions' meek compliance with these regimes, are plain to see in poverty pay and the widening wealth gap.

## Current Attacks



Still, the ERA is an improvement on the ECA. The difference is illustrated last year's Ports of Auckland dispute. The port company fell foul of the good faith bargaining clauses and was unable to achieve its objective to smash the Maritime Union. However, the continuity of legal restrictions was also shown. The union was at a disadvantage because whereas ships could be diverted to other ports, legal industrial action was confined to the Auckland wharves. Consequently, the union adopted a compromise approach because it felt unable to adopt the road of illegal action.

The port and meat workers' strikes of 2012 saw off employers' attempts to break the unions. These successes, and

the persistence of MECAs in the health and education systems, are behind the National's introduction of the Employment Relations Amendment Bill. This is by far the most substantial legal attack on workers since the ECA. The Bill's main provisions are to undermine collective bargaining, toughen anti-strike clauses, disadvantage new workers, weaken protection for workers transferred between contractors and abolish legal minimum rest breaks.

The CTU has produced some good factsheets on the Bill. Behind any effective negotiation lies the threat of strike action, the well-spring of union power. Workers may not need to go on strike to win concessions, but they need

to be prepared to take action. The Bill's anti-strike clauses need to be widely understood.

A legal strike can only take place over collective bargaining, provided that a collective agreement has expired, 40 days has elapsed since bargaining initiated and there has been a secret ballot. The Bill adds another layer of restriction, which is to require unions to give notice of strikes to the employers. The notice would tell the employer the "nature of the proposed strike, including whether or not it will be continuous", the places the strike will occur, the time and date the strike will begin, and the time and date the strike will end.

The requirements take away all elements of tactical flexibility by unions. The employers would know exactly what to prepare for in order to limit the effectiveness of the strikes.

The main changes the government are attempting to introduce are to undermine collective bargaining. They would allow employers to ask the Employment Relations Authority to declare that bargaining is over, although agreement has not been reached. Unions would not be able to initiate bargaining again for 60 days; and once bargaining is declared to be over workers will lose the ability to strike legally. This measure is evidently inspired by the legal problems the Ports of Auckland had.

# The Employment Relations Amendment Bill



*MUNZ and Ports of Auckland have yet to sign a new contract. The dispute has dragged on for well over a year... (Photo: MUNZ)*

Another part of the attack on collectivism is to undermine multi-employer collective agreements. In the public service – in particular health and education – where well over three-quarters of workers are covered by MECAs, this is a clear attempt to undermine public-sector unionism.

The government wants to take away the right of new employees to be put on an existing collective agreement for their first 30 days. The reason for this change was explained in a Cabinet Paper, it “will enable employers to offer individual terms and conditions that are less than those in the collective agreement.”

For contracted services there are changes to workers' rights on transfer of employment from one contractor to another. Small firms of less than 20 employees would be exempt from having to comply with the existing legal protection.

Another change is to rest breaks. The current law provides minimal rights to breaks: a 10 minute break every 4 hours and a 30 minute break if working over 4 hours. National wants to remove even these pathetic rights. Instead, employers will be able to decide what breaks to give, if any. If they do not allow a break at all they will be legally obliged to make compensation, but are vulnerable workers likely to be able to enforce compliance?

The Employment Relations Amendment Bill is about driving down workers' terms and conditions. It is an indictment of the anti-worker, class-war policy of the National Party. It is not good enough

for them that New Zealand heads the league table for growth of inequality, that we have a disgraceful level of child poverty and that so many people have to head overseas to make a living. This government is small-minded and mean-spirited. Their policies are grubby and backward. They have no strategy but to squeeze more out of the working class.

## Organising Resistance

How can the working class effectively fight back against the Bill? In 1991 the union movement was still strong, and could have fought the ECA with a general strike. There were many calls for a general strike, but they were headed off by the CTU leadership. We are not strong today and there is no chance of a general strike to defeat the Employment Relations Amendment Bill.

If we cannot fight the Bill industrially, we can politically. The Bill is only in its early stages of parliamentary progress; there is time to mount a campaign against it. Defeating the Bill in Parliament may seem difficult to achieve, but it cannot be ruled out given the government's slim majority. Who knows what may happen over the next six months?

National has thrown down the gauntlet to the unions. The socialist Left should respond in the spirit of the united front, recognising the opportunity for a broad-based campaign led by the CTU that embraces union officialdom and activists. In the first instance, there is a

need for an extensive educational campaign about the Bill. Beyond initial educational work amongst union members we should aim for an outgoing campaign.

A narrow focus on union members is not enough. Some on the Left have called on the CTU to name the day for a national day of action at the earliest opportunity. The action would be stopwork meetings around the country in the manner of the day of action in October 2010 against the last raft of employment law amendments. This call is premature. As in 2010 it would result in far too small meetings to provide a launch-pad for industrial escalation. The October 2010 day of action marked the end of any effective campaign. What is needed is a truly mass-scale, deep groundswell against this attack on the working class. Mickey-mouse “days of action” will not do.

More than anything else we need a political campaign that links opposition to the Bill to a wider struggle against poverty pay and inequality, not ruling out, however, mobilising in support of any specific strike actions over contracts that may occur. A union campaign against the Bill could be an opportunity for unions to reclaim their relevance to thousands of currently unorganised workers, provided the unions come out clearly fighting for the working class.

**Martin Gregory**



# ***Fighting to Choose: The Abortion Rights Struggle in New Zealand***

When the first abortion clinic opened its doors in Invercargill last year, anti-abortionists quickly mobilized against it. An anonymous e-mail was sent to the Abortion Law Reform Association NZ threatening ALRANZ and clinic staff: "People who work at the clinic are legitimate targets and so are you. You'll be hearing from me again, that is if your computer, or in fact your premises, are in one piece".

Disgustingly, Bill English, whose electorate is in Southland and who is an antiabortionist himself, refused to condemn such threats of violence.

Threats by antiabortionists and support for their actions from politicians are sadly nothing new. As feminist author and journalist Alison McCulloch meticulously documents in *Fighting to Choose: The Abortion Rights Struggle in New Zealand*, threats, violence, arson and bomb attacks have always been mainstays of anti-abortion campaigning. Arson was the fate of the very first abortion clinic Auckland Medical Aid Centre, opened in 1976.

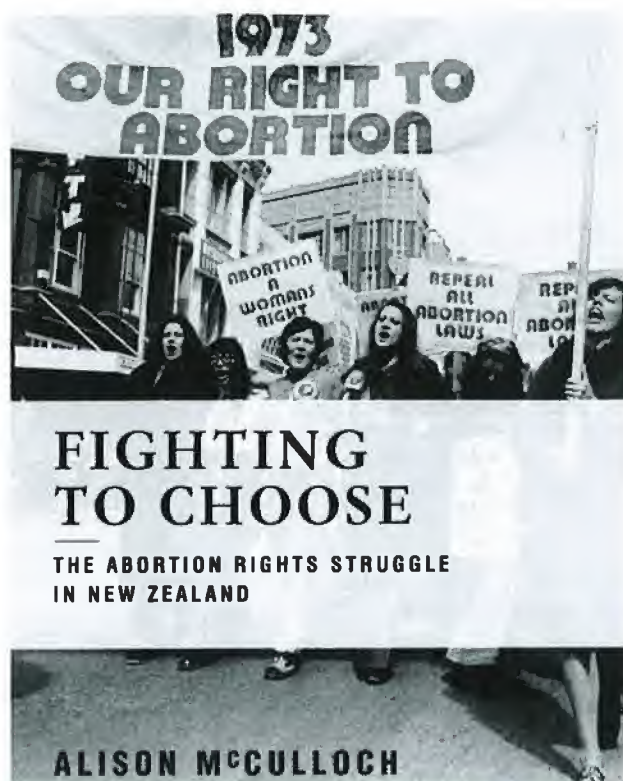
## **Abortion today**

*Fighting to Choose* is a tribute to the heroic women and men who fought for the pro-choice platform that we take so much for granted today. Against all the odds, pro-choice activists took on the 95% male government, a conservative medical association, the media, the Catholic Church, and a rabid antiabortionist organisation SPUC. While they did not manage an outright victory, pro-choice campaigners forced concessions to enable women greater

access to abortions. The number of women who have safe abortions in New Zealand today is a testament to this partial victory.

If *Fighting to Choose* is a tribute, it is also an intervention in an ongoing fight to decriminalize abortion. McCulloch offers an honest appraisal of the contradictory situation women face today: the failure to decriminalize abortion on the one hand, but the reality that, however demeaning, cumbersome, and time-consuming the process, women have greater access to abortion now than ever before.

McCulloch spells out what this contradictory situation means for women today: "women still endure a powerful cultural taboo against abortion that is codified in a set of punitive laws passed by a conservative and overwhelmingly male Parliament. There is no 'right' to choose abortion in New Zealand, and the access that women do have is under constant judicial and political assault."



*Fighting to Choose* is an absolute must read for anyone interested in abortion and reproductive justice. But more than this, the book offers lessons for women fighting to decriminalize abortion today.

Should we focus on street marches? Do we prioritise lobbying politicians and other respectable members of the public? Should activists tone down the message of "women's right to choose" and make it an issue of "health and safety"? These are all questions that have ongoing relevance and are thoroughly examined in McCulloch's book.

## **Reform or repeal?**

In the 1970s, it was the more radical Women's National Abortion Action Campaign (Wonaac) that emphasised the need to repeal the laws on abortions and organised street marches and protests to emphasise the message of a women's right to choose. The more conservative Alranz took the approach of



# Book Review: Fighting to Choose

health and safety and lobbying respectable people like politicians, doctors, etc. While both organizations worked together when they could, McCulloch observes that "in the rush to find the mythical middle ground of the abortion issue in the 1970s, Wonaac was frequently sacrificed by those looking to appease nervous politicians." McCulloch sees a naivety at the heart of reformist strategy:

*"Proponents of the reformist strategy seemed convinced that their sheer reasonableness would win the day. Not only were they wrong, but also in rejecting the feminist platform, some of the 1970s reformers helped undermine their own cause and weaken their own movement."*

Indeed, one of the major lessons that McCulloch emphasises in different ways throughout the book is that "being defensive about abortion in the face of a conservative moral agenda doesn't work."

It is a little-known fact that the slogan 'abortion on demand' was propagated by the antiabortion camp to paint pro-choice activists as 'extremists' and to keep these activists on the back foot. In doing so, Spuc could claim the moral high ground. McCulloch writes that this strategy "was one of Spuc's major successes. And it was a success Wonaac and other pro-choice groups did not - and arguably have not - managed to fully counter'.

The support for antiabortionist SPUC was formidable. With backing from the Catholic Church and political establishment, including key figures in the Labour party, SPUC had money and influence in a way that the pro-choice movement could only dream of and "were never ... shy about being certain, about placing this much bigger moral agenda behind abortion, yet feminists and pro-choice supporters have taken many of these questions at face value."

## Women's Liberation Movement

Another strength of this book is the way in which the abortion rights campaign is contextualized within the wider women's liberation movement. Pro-choice activists "cut their political teeth opposing the Vietnam War, racist rugby tours, environmental degradation and even rules against mixed flatting. Universities were the incubators for

much of this political activity, and more and more women were enrolling".

Just because you were active in women's liberation, it didn't automatically mean that you would be pro choice. Co-founder of National Organisation of Women, trade unionist and campaigner for equal pay, Connie Purdue's history shows contradictory consciousness. In the first United Women's Convention in 1973, Purdue and 25 other antiabortion supporters walked out of the convention in disgust as the majority of the 1500 women present voted in favour of a pro-choice platform.

Alongside feminists, socialists in Socialist Action League (SAL) were also involved in the fight for abortion rights from the very beginning. SAL women formed an important core of Wonaac in its inception, and were "central to the direction Wonaac took" - particularly fighting against a reformist compromise on abortion rights. Their politics were particularly influenced by US socialist-feminist Lucinda Cisler. Cisler was far-sighted enough to warn feminists of, "the failure of repeal efforts would leave a relatively liberal practice unhappily wedded to a restrictive law ... Cisler advised against accepting incremental changes to abortion laws ... once a law was reformed, even to a minor degree, further change would become virtually impossible."

Thirty-six years after the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion act became enshrined, these warnings from Cisler are almost prophetic in the way she describes our current situation. The compromises, the look towards incremental changes has produced a law that is riddled with ambiguity, and which no lawmaker wants to touch because it is too "controversial".

## Royal Commission

"If New Zealand's failure to liberalise its abortion laws", McCulloch begins her chapter on the Royal Commission "can be tied to a single cause, it would be the 1975 - 77 Royal Commission on Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion". She continues:

*"Its conservative and frequently poorly argued report set the struggle for women's reproductive rights in New Zealand back by decades."*

While SPUC undoubtedly contributed to this by hiring barristers and spending

up to \$118,000 to make submissions defending the "right to life", McCulloch astutely notes that it was the process of the Commission itself that would entail failure. A "commission of inquiry ... was not going to work with abortion, where everything is in dispute, where there is no middle ground ... no neutral path, and, in the end, no way of avoiding coming down on one side or the other". Elsewhere she continues, "inquiries can be extremely successful at muting political activity ... for its [Royal Commission's] duration, it effectively shut off all alternative routes towards change."

## Lessons

There are so many insights, hilarious Wonaac stunts, debates of the left and right in this brilliant book that it would be difficult to pin down one favourite. For me the best lesson in McCulloch's book comes from her ending:

*"Abortion is not just about abortion. Opponents with broader moral agendas have a vested interest in how we answer questions about whether or not a fertilized egg is a 'person', what its moral status is, whether or not the state or society should have a say in the abortion decision. They have never been shy about being certain, about placing this much bigger moral agenda behind abortion, yet feminists and pro-choice supporters have taken many of these questions at face value ... embracing the complexity of the issue and in good faith trying to address it ... While the pro-choice movement must take part in the wider discussions, there is at the same time - and both sides agree - really no 'debate' and no common ground."*

Future pro-choice struggles must be absolutely, unapologetically for a woman's right to choose. But this struggle must also be a struggle for genuine women's emancipation, one that challenges the very logic of a system that degrades women's unpaid and unappreciated work in the home, a system that benefits from women getting paid less than men, and a system that is sexist to the core. Alison McCulloch's fantastic, activist history contributes to that struggle.

**Shomi Yoon**

# Treaty settlements can never be “full and final”



Protest against the 'Terror Raids' against Tuhoe in 2007

**In early June, Tuhoe signed a settlement under the Treaty of Waitangi process worth \$170 million as reparation for 170 years of state terrorism, discrimination, land confiscation and war.**

The value of the settlement, like all settlements, is only about 1% of the value of the land lost – never mind reparations for theft and war. Indeed, the total amount spent by the government on all settlements, to all tribes, is less than the government spent bailing out South Canterbury Finance in 2010. These are in no way ‘full’ settlements.

The National Party aims to have “full and final” settlements for all outstanding grievances by 2014 – next year. Tuhoe and other iwi are meant to leverage these pitiful sums (about \$5000 per tribe member) on the market to overcome almost two centuries of colonisation and second-class citizenship.

**So why have National and Labour been so keen to settle Treaty grievances?**

Despite bitter opposition from its redneck supporters, National has pretty consistently followed the path laid down by the 1984 Labour Government. Throughout the 1990s, when Maori unemployment was at 1930s Depression-era levels, Maori Affairs Minister Doug Graham swanned around marae, draped in a korowai, giving out cash to any tribe that would settle.

The “neo-liberal” era since 1984 has seen a strange combination of economic brutality towards Maori with cultural concessions and Treaty settlements. Low wages and child poverty stand in stark contrast to the government making te reo an official language.

The Treaty settlements were not introduced because sometime in the 1980s the ruling class had a change of heart and started to regret decades of land theft and near-genocide. The settlements are a direct response to the rise in Maori protest in the 1970s and 80s. The Maori protest movement

coincided and overlapped with an upturn in union struggle, and was inspired by international struggles like the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, which was won by militant black trade unionists.

The second-class status of Maori people was a real problem for the New Zealand state. It discredited the state's claim to democracy and added an undercurrent of bitterness to protests and strikes, a subterranean stream of anger that went right back to the Land Wars.

The economic crisis of the time also meant a political crisis for the ruling class. Capitalist democracy in New Zealand historically rested on farmers. While big business rules, until the 1980s it ruled thanks to rural support. Not only did farmers provide the bedrock of voting support for capitalism, they also provided the scab-herding, strike-breaking shock troops on the streets, in 1913 and 1951 most famously, but right through into the 1980s.

The concentration of farmland and the demise of small farmers, combined with the rise of the urban professional class have meant the ruling class has increasingly looked elsewhere for support. Redneck attitudes are not so popular among urban professionals; the old tie between right-wing economics and conservative politics was broken.

This has allowed the state some room for manoeuvre, which was crucially necessary given the need to defuse the Maori protest movement. As farmer support became less important for National, they were able to mitigate some of the hostility Maori felt towards them – to the extent that now a National Government has been propped up for five years by the Maori Party.

Treaty settlements have been an important part of that process, spanning almost thirty years now. At every step the legitimacy of the Government to hand out compensation has been questioned. But Labour and



National persevered, winning over iwi one by one. The more iwi that signed on, the more the pressure mounted on those that had not.

An important part of the Treaty process has been the documentation of colonisation and land theft, and specific apologies. These are milestones and hard-won victories for truth and justice.

## Can treaty settlements raise living standards?

The rise of iwi money is set to change the game in rural New Zealand. Iwi now have economic clout they have not had since the 19th century, when Maori-owned ships traded throughout the Pacific, from Bluff to Sydney and Waikato to Hawaii.

The first inkling of the new order came last year when a consortium of iwi leaders persuaded Talley's Affco to back off their attempt to smash the meatworkers union, threatening to boycott the company and set up a rival company.

But despite unprecedented finances at the iwi level, ordinary Maori whanau are doing it harder than ever, with double the average unemployment and lower wages than Pakeha.

Some Maori have done well. There are more jobs than ever in the civil service, including teaching, for Maori who are fluent in te reo. There are also a small handful of jobs running iwi corporates and sitting on boards.

Hekia Parata is a classic case. From anti-apartheid protester in 1981, Parata climbed through the government bureaucracy, spent time in Ngai Tahu Development Corporation and earned \$207,500 giving Winz "ongoing high quality Maori advice". During that period, Maori unemployment rose from 27% to 29%. Parata's political attachment to the National Party is a clear example of ideas following class interests.

Even with the best will in the world it is unlikely that Treaty money can raise living standards for more than a tiny elite. With this latest settlement amounting to only \$5000 per iwi member, there is no way this can provide any boost to living standards in the long term. It is clear that more jobs with higher pay are needed.

## Full and final?

The chaos of the market can make settlement money disappear. North Taranaki's Ngati Tama have already lost all of their settlement. Deprived of all their land in the 19th century, the iwi won compensation of \$14.5 million in 2003, but lost it all less than ten years later. Attorney-General Chris Finlayson said it was very sad but Crown involvement in iwi decision-making would be "a return to a very paternalistic period".

"It also undermines the concept of full and final settlement, by suggesting the Crown has an ongoing role as guarantor," Mr Finlayson said.

More recently, the *The Waikato Times* last month screeched that "Bailouts, bad ventures" had wiped almost half the value off Tuwharetoa's \$66m Treaty settlement. The real story was apparently less sensational, with only \$5 million lost and much of the rest paid to Tuwharetoa's hapu (sub-tribes).

Nonetheless, the many gleeful comments under the story provide ample warning that the fall from grace of iwi corporates would be welcomed by racists as proof of Maori incompetence.

Even Ngai Tahu, the most financially successful of all iwi, could be bankrupted overnight. Until South Canterbury Finance fell, it was said to be the safest pair of hands in the business. Sandy Maier, the former CEO of South Canterbury Finance is a member of the Ngai Tahu Investment Advisory Sub-Committee.

Whether the iwi corporates thrive or die, one thing is certain. Real change comes from below. The protest movement of the 1970s and 80s forced the government to make concessions. These concessions are proving as empty as the promises of the Treaty - there is no choice but to fight again.

**Andrew Tait**



*Hekia Parata, National MP*

# McDonald's Workers Striking for a Better Deal



Unite picket a McDonalds in Wellington, Wednesday 22nd of May. (Photo: Damon Rusden)

**Unite union members have been taking industrial action at McDonald's stores across the country since May, fighting for improvements in pay and conditions to match union agreements in other fast-food franchises. These strikes, despite the small numbers of workers involved, are hugely significant, and not just for workers in fast food.**

If organised workers in Unite can win against McDonald's cut-throat management, they will offer an inspiration to us all.

A win will not just be an inspiration. How fast food is organised epitomises what makes trade unionism so difficult in the neoliberal era. McDonald's is all about low wages, high staff turn-over rates, casualisation, and precision timing. Individual workers can feel superfluous, cogs in a larger machine. How, in this era of McJobs, can we possibly talk about union rights? Many in the trade union movement, both in Aotearoa and internationally, have become demoralised after decades of set-

backs and defeats. We cannot just blame the political direction of union leaders for this, although a revival of class-struggle, militant unionism will require a political battle. Working people lack confidence in their self-activity and self-organisation, and have few examples from recent history to show themselves their potential power. Unionised workers, in taking on McDonald's, offer a powerful corrective to this pessimism. They are showing the rest of us how it can still be done. Given the powerful symbolism of McDonald's – the global corporation, the ultra-ruthless employer, the inventor of the McJob – this acts as a spur elsewhere.

At the same time, this action at McDonald's counters other myths. Some, drawing on autonomist theorists, have dismissed the role of the organised working class in the twenty-first century, seeing the 'precariat' of precarious workers as a new social force. But it's old-fashioned trade-unionism – and casual contracts covering what are de facto permanent positions – that show up the continuities between employment today and past employment patterns.

We have been backing this strike all the way. It is unclear, as *Socialist Review*, goes to press, what the outcome of this struggle will be, but one thing is clear: McDonald's had better get used to battles, because Unite union is not going away.

## Why are workers on strike?

McDonald's are a low-pay employer. After six months at McDonald's Balmoral a worker could be making just \$13.75 per hour, well below what is considered a living wage. Compare that to the \$14.73 per hour Unite union has won for members at KFC. Workers at McDonald's can work more than 8-hour shifts and receive no overtime pay; they



get no meal while working their shift; and there are no insurance clauses in their contracts. Again, the comparison with KFC shows what union coverage can achieve: KFC deliver time-and-a-half for overtime work, provide meals during shifts, and give out payments in the case of the death of a family member. This is not the result of KFC being 'better' employers – it's the sign of what standing together, as union, workers can achieve. No wonder McDonald's are fighting to keep Unite down.

A win this year would set a precedent, and change the culture of the stores. And, for workers in other industries, it would send a message that the low-wage norm can be confronted.

## Bullying Senior Management

McDonald's stores run on organising bullying and intimidation – the constant pressure to work harder, faster, longer. Worse, fast food companies use multiple gradations of management and supervision within stores to divide workers. The company has not been above using racial tactics of divide and rule, including anti-Asian racism. As Unite union explains:

*Because promotion to a managers role was a precondition to being able to progress to permanent residence many franchisees and managers would use false promises of future reward to get staff to work through their breaks and unpaid overtime. Promises of promotion and training often went unfulfilled while pay often didn't match the actual role workers were fulfilling.*



Unite picket outside Manurewa McDonalds, Friday 31st of May. (Photo: Derwin Smith)

*The managers salary has been reduced by 30% or more in real value over the 20 years. At the same time the stores have become larger in both product volume and employment terms. Restaurant Managers at McDonald's get around \$40-45,000 for running a 24/7 operation with up to a 100 staff and millions of dollars in turnover annually. The job is only paid as a 40 hour a week position but inevitably managers are working an extra 10-20 hours a week without pay.*

*McDonald's wouldn't be able to get a citizen or permanent resident to do the job for that sort of money. Instead they have used the fact that temporary work visa holders are tied to a particular company to get aspiring migrants to do these jobs.*

*It is a system that invites abuse and unite has evidence of staff working unpaid, being discouraged from joining a union, and even*

*cases of bribery and corruption in allocating jobs inside the company.*

Siddhata, a worker at McDonald's Queen Street, told Unite:

*"I have seen every kind of corruption in McDonald's - racism, nepotism, favouritism - if you want to see what is wrong with the world you can see it all in one McDonald's. They are offering us only 25 cents increase. I could have stayed at home in India and got better."*

As our union organisation has declined over the last decades, we have become more atomised at work, more susceptible to bullying, division, management harassment. The confidence and dignity workers in struggle can gain again offers the chance of a precedent.

## Struggle

There are challenges facing this campaign. Union action needs to be centred on members' activity – a union campaign is a member-driven campaign or it is nothing. But the kinds of networks of members – and the experience of struggle that could give them self-confidence – need rebuilding. So this is a start.

The rest of us can support McDonald's workers, but they must take the lead. If Unite can win this struggle, who knows where next battle may be?

To find out more about the Unite campaign visit [www.mcstrike.org.nz](http://www.mcstrike.org.nz)



Unite picket outside Britomart McDonalds, Saturday 8th June. (Photo: Derwin Smith)

**Dougal McNeill**

# Racism – Alive and Dangerous

**The outbursts of racism last month have made me sick to the very core. First a racist cartoon blaming individuals for poverty and a widespread response which claimed 'it's just a joke' and the news that a neo-nazi group 'Right Wing Resistance' is trying to set up branches around the country.**

As times get more desperate and people start feeling the brunt of economic hard times, people start looking round for something to blame. Racism is a tool to focus the anger of everyday people away from the people responsible for creating the hard times – government and city council cutbacks and bosses that lay people off, slumlords and profiteering power companies – and onto other, even worse-off, sections of society.

The cartoon in the *Marlborough Express* was an example of how racism is used to divide the working class.

Nisbet's ugly cartoon uses racist mockery to make food in schools seem dirty and demeaning. He has claimed "it's just a joke", and told people to "lighten up". But this is not a light-hearted thing. Nisbet is playing on some pretty deep stereotypes – about the nuclear family and about "lazy Maoris" – to get his laughs.

Feeding children in schools is not something which should be controversial or race-based. So why is it that an issue so mainstream has raised a racist monster? Because it is something that benefits all working class families and challenges the nuclear family, which is so essential to the smooth-running of capitalism. The nuclear family individualises care for the well-being of workers, and places the responsibility of children onto the family – specifically on to unpaid women's work – rather than society as a whole. Capitalism benefits because the reproduction of the next generation of labour is done at the expense of the workers themselves.

Feeding children in schools is seen as outrageous to people who think food and childcare (and often health care and care for the elderly) should be completely privatised. In practice this means nannies and private schools for the rich and neglect for the children of the poor. There is nothing inherently wrong with shared childcare or food being provided at school – or work.

The reality is all working class families will benefit from this. These so called 'jokes' and 'satirical' cartoons open up space for openly racist scumbags like convicted terrorist Kyle Chapman and his gang of neo-Nazis.

Kyle Chapman is a right-wing parasite who feeds on alienation and desperation. He has a history of racist violence, and a criminal record for firebombing marae. He has been part of white supremacy groups since he was 14 and in 2009 became the leader of the grandiosely named Right-Wing Resistance – a group of drop outs and thugs who like to parade around with swastika tats in pretend SS uniforms. His "white pride" marches in Christchurch blame immigrants and Maori for society's ills. Right Wing Resistance has been linked to attacks on immigrants in Christchurch – usually a gang of cowards attacking a single person!

Recently Chapman claimed his minions in Dunedin had distributed 1000 leaflets titled "China: a threat to New Zealand?" In response to a complaint, Chapman told the *Otago Daily Times* "If they can't accept that we are in a free country, in a free society, with free speech, then they really came to the wrong country. If they



*Kyle Chapman - Neo-Nazi leader*

want to go to a country that is full of fear, where people aren't allowed to speak out, they really need to go back to whatever country they came from."

This is bullshit. Chapman is a terrorist. He has the record to prove it. This leaflet is calculated to intimidate. It is people like him who in fact make people fearful to walk down the streets of Christchurch. He is a Nazi, an enemy of free speech and a street thug. He would dearly love to set up a branch in Dunedin and other cities, gather in cranks, bigots and disaffected and alienated youth to use as minions to make racism just another part of the political scenery. His words are the theory, hate crime is the practice.

The International Socialist Organisation exists to build working class unity and power. We reckon Kyle Chapman is a buffoon, but that never stopped Mussolini taking power. Mussolini's melodramatic combination of thuggery and respectability helped birth Hitler's hell on earth. Chapman may be an idiot but we take his threats seriously because he himself is the dupe of bigger forces.

**Rowan McArthur**





*A dramatic upsurge in working class struggle, surpassing in magnitude the rise of the Red Feds from 1908 to 1913 and the 1951 Waterfront Lockout, took place in New Zealand from the Arbitration Court's nil general wage order in June 1968 to the union movement's defeat of the Muldoon Government's attempted wage freeze in 1976.*

*This article describes and analyses these struggles and their impact on progressive social movements, particularly the anti-war, women's liberation, and Maori protest movements.*

This pamphlet, about the strike wave and protest movements of the late 1960s and 1970s, is a useful resource for activists today. The International Socialist Organisation is committed to producing and distributing quality material that arms activists with knowledge we need to take into the struggles of the future.

If you would like to buy a copy of this pamphlet please email us at:  
[contact@iso.org.nz](mailto:contact@iso.org.nz)

## Our Branches

### Tamaki Makaurau Auckland

The Tamaki branch meets every Thursday at 6:30pm, in Room 314, Building Arts 1, Auckland University. We also do stalls and poster runs around the central city. If you would like to get involved please come to a branch meeting or email us at [contact@iso.org.nz](mailto:contact@iso.org.nz) or text/ring 022 679 9417.

### Poneke/Wellington

The Poneke branch meets every Tuesday at 6:30pm, at Victoria University (Kelburn campus) in Room SU219. Every other week we hold public meetings on a range of topics, and on the alternate weeks we have unadvertised study/discussion groups. If you would like to know the locations of these meetings please email us at [contact@iso.org.nz](mailto:contact@iso.org.nz) or text/ring 022 312 8018.

### Otepoti/Dunedin

The Otepoti branch meets every Thursday at 7:30pm. We are based on campus so during term time we meet in the Otago room of the OUSA Clubs and Societies Center, 84 Albany St. If you would like to know the locations of non-term time meetings please email [contact@iso.org.nz](mailto:contact@iso.org.nz) or text/ring 022 155 8212.

# US Imperialism's Pivot to Asia



*Obama visits military post near Korean DMZ, March 2013.*

**In his second inaugural address, President Obama announced that after he withdraws combat troops from Afghanistan, the United States will be 'ending a decade of wars.' On the very same day, the United States conducted three drone strikes in Yemen. In reality, Washington is now in a permanent state of 'low-intensity' drone wars all around the world and is preparing, through what has been called the Pivot to Asia, to contain China.**

Obama is no pacifist. In his second term, he intends not to retreat from American imperial assertion but to strengthen it.

Obama is just as committed as his predecessor George W. Bush to the grand strategy of global domination that has aimed to incorporate all the world's

states into a US-managed unipolar world order. Bush had hoped to lock in US supremacy by using 9/11 as an alibi to invade Afghanistan and Iraq on the way to further regime changes in Syria and Iran. His goal was to control what foreign policy wonks call the Greater Middle East, its energy reserves, and shipping and pipeline routes. The

United States could thereby control potential peer competitors, like China, which rely heavily on fuel imports from that region. Bush also intended to establish permanent bases throughout Central Asia in order to encircle both China and Russia. The insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan wrecked these plans. Instead of securing US hegemony, the occupations backfired and in turn precipitated an imperial crisis. The Great Recession further accelerated the decline of US power.

In the wake of these strategic and economic disasters, the unipolar world order is being replaced by an asymmetric, multipolar world order. The United States stands out as the world's only superpower, but it now faces a major imperial rival in China and a host of regional ones including Russia, India, and Brazil among others.

To address this predicament, Obama issued a new Defense Strategic Guidance in January 2012 entitled "Sustaining US Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century Defense" that announced his "Pivot to Asia."



## Contradictions of the United States' China policy

With this new policy, he is dramatically reorienting American imperialism on the region most experts predict will be the hub of twenty-first century capitalism—the Asia Pacific. Obama continues to promise engagement with China to lure it into an international order under American hegemony, but his actual policies demonstrate an unmistakable shift toward containment of China as its principal imperial rival.

US strategy toward China has undergone dramatic shifts from the Cold War to today. After Nixon's famous engagement with China in the early 1970s, Washington treated it as an ally against Russia. Once the Cold War ended and US-China relations resumed after the Tiananmen Square massacre, the United States celebrated a neoliberal honeymoon with China, using it as an export-processing platform for American multinationals. But that very policy has ironically helped turn China into a competitive rival.

US strategy has thus become plagued by a fundamental contradiction—it is economically integrated with its main international competitor, relying on Chinese credit to sustain the deficit and cheap labour to boost the bottom lines of US corporations. The American state has facilitated US corporations like Apple offshoring production to China, for example. On the other hand, the United States and its corporations are now increasingly coming into conflict with the Chinese state and capital. Expressing this conundrum, Hillary Clinton famously asked, “How can you get tough with your banker?”

For a while the United States managed this contradiction with a policy of engagement, which it still verbally declares, but always paired it with a subordinate policy of containment. Aaron Friedberg has coined the neologism “conengagement” to capture the contradictory nature of US strategy toward China.

During the Clinton administration, when American engagement with China was at its height and his state department called it a “strategic partner,” the United States still sustained its military power throughout Asia as a deterrent to Beijing. It also staged the single largest military action since the Vietnam War in 1996 to block China's threat against Taiwan.

In reaction to China's increasing power, the Bush administration re-termed China a “strategic competitor.” It also found itself locked in a harsh standoff with Beijing over a collision between a Chinese fighter jet and an American spy plane over China. But after 9/11, Bush backed off his confrontational approach to seek China's support in the “war on terror.” He also advocated its entry into the WTO as a means to incorporate it into the world system.

## Military encirclement of China

To buttress American political and economic initiatives, the Obama administration is engaged in a dramatic increase in the US military presence in Asia and the Pacific. Until recently, the US Pacific Command (PACOM) had based its force deployment on templates left over from the Cold War. The United States now wants to disperse these forces throughout the region, establish bases and military relationships with as many countries as possible, increase arms sales to allies, and increase its naval presence in the strategic shipping lanes that connect Asia to the rest of the world economy. The United States thus intends nothing less than the military encirclement of China.

There are already 320,000 US military personnel stationed on bases throughout Asia from its “unsinkable aircraft carrier,” Japan, to Korea and Guam, among others. In the Philippines, the United States has deployed thousands of trainers (a.k.a., soldiers)

from the Joint Special Operation Task Force as part of the war on terror against Abu Sayyaf. It has also sent two new cutter ships to the country to aid it in patrolling the islands it contests with China.

And Washington wants to increase the number of bases in the region. It plans to relocate significant numbers of troops now based in Okinawa, Japan, to Guam, Hawaii, and Australia. The proposed redeployment of eight thousand marines to Guam is particularly significant. It will add a major new base that is only three hours' flight time from the Asian coastline.

The United States has also established new military rights in Singapore. This city-state is strategically situated in the Strait of Malacca, through which 90 percent of China's seaborne energy is shipped. “Singapore has emerged as the fulcrum for US defense engagement in Southeast Asia,” notes a CSIS report. “In early 2012, Singapore agreed to host

four US littoral combat ships at Changhi Naval Base where naval facilities already are in place to berth a US aircraft carrier. . . . The US Navy has come to rely heavily on Singapore as a logistics hub in Southeast Asia, particularly for fuel.”

The United States has also opened a new base in Darwin, Australia, that will eventually host twenty-five hundred marines. “This is all about the rise of China, the modernization of the People's Liberation Army and, particularly, it's about the increased vulnerability of US forces in Japan and Guam to the new generation of Chinese missiles,” argues Alan DuPont, the Michael Hintze Professor of International Security at Sydney University.” The new Chinese missiles could threaten them in a way they've never been able to before, so the US is starting to reposition them to make them less vulnerable. Australia's “tyranny of distance” is now a distinct strategic advantage.”

## Asia-Pacific shipping lanes



the United States is encouraging Japan under Abe to end its constitutional ban on collective self-defense. The American military is also dramatically increasing its military-to-military relationships throughout the region. Obama terminated the ban on US forces engaging with the dreaded Indonesian special operations forces (Kopassus), which was responsible for sundry crimes against the people of East Timor. Washington has also established relations with the Vietnamese military, including engaging in joint naval exercises in the South China Sea.

These exercises with Vietnam are only the tip of the iceberg. In 2012, the United States conducted the massive Cobra Gold military

The United States will now deploy 60 percent of its naval ships in the region. As Michael Klare argues,

*"For China, all this spells potential strategic impairment. Although some of China's imported oil will travel overland through pipelines from Kazakhstan and Russia, the great majority of it will still come by tanker from the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America over sea lanes policed by the US Navy. Indeed, almost every tanker bringing oil to China travels across the South China Sea, a body of water the Obama administration is now seeking to place under effective naval control."*

The United States is also increasing weapons sales to its allies in the region. Various Asian states alarmed by China's assertiveness and North Korea's nuclear missile capacity have sought to purchase weapon systems from the United States, which is happy for the business, and which fits neatly in its

**"The United States will now deploy 60 percent of its naval ships in the region"**

plans to encircle China. In just one example in 2012, Washington approved the \$421 million upgrade of Japan's Aegis missile defense system, which is nominally designed to neutralize any launches from North Korea, but it can also do the same toward any Chinese missiles.

In 2012 alone, Reuters reports, "sales agreements with countries in the US Pacific Command's area of activity rose to \$13.7 billion in fiscal 2012, up 5.4 percent from a year before." They predict "US sales of warplanes, anti-missile systems and other costly weapons to China's and North Korea's neighbors appear set for significant growth amid regional security jitters."

The United States intends these recipients of US arms to take up more responsibility in containing China. Thus

exercise with Thailand, Korea, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, and observers from more than twenty other nations, including Myanmar. The exercise included more than twenty thousand soldiers. It conducted similar naval exercises with Japan and South Korea. And now, astonishingly, India conducts more exercises with the United States than any other nation. These exercises effectively integrate the region's militaries with the United States, ensure interoperability, and bring them into America's military encirclement of China.



## Interimperial rivalry in the twenty-first century

Contrary to neoliberal fantasies, globalization has not brought an end to conflicts between nation-states. While the United States remains the world's preeminent power, it is in relative decline against its rising and potential peer competitor, China. Thus, capitalism continues to stoke interimperial rivalries over dominance in the world system. But this growing rivalry is unlikely to

produce any large-scale war for two key reasons.

First, the extreme degree of economic integration among the United States, China, and the entire Asia-Pacific tends to pull the powers back from confrontation. Second, because many of the powers involved in the scramble for Asia have nuclear weapons it deters conflicts from degenerating into shooting wars.

Nuclear warfare threatens the

respective countries in war with annihilation.

This nuclear deterrent will tend to lead states to avoid military confrontation and instead engage in geo-economic struggle. They will punish each other through political and economic means, thereby pulling apart the economic integration globalization has wrought. Despite these two countervailing forces,

**"...it is easy to imagine the sharp tensions exacerbated by Obama's pivot producing at least small-scale clashes."**

it is easy to imagine the sharp tensions exacerbated by Obama's pivot producing at least small-scale clashes. The extreme nationalism being

fostered by ruling classes from one end of the region to the other, including the United States, where China-bashing has

become de rigueur in the political establishment, will exacerbate the drift toward such increasing conflict. The hope amidst this horror is the potential for the working classes and peasantry already in struggle across the region to develop the organization and consciousness to build international solidarity in the fight against imperialism and the capitalist system that breeds it.

**Ashley Smith**

[These are extracts from a long and in-depth analysis of US imperialism's role in Asia. For the full article, with references, refer to

[www.internationalviewpoint.org](http://www.internationalviewpoint.org)]

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# Confronting an Elected Dictator: Popular Mobilization in Turkey



**Mass demonstrations and harsh governmental crackdowns are not new in Turkish political history. While the current demonstrations in Istanbul and throughout Turkey were initiated by socialists, there is no doubt that we are experiencing something strikingly different this time.**

This is displayed by not only the visible lack of political experience of a significant number of the demonstrators but also the sheer number and incredible resiliency of the demonstrators in the face of massive and injurious tear gas assaults of the police. What is the cause of this massive social explosion in a country where there is no sign of economic crisis, and where the government was elected in 2011 with 50% of the votes?

To better understand what is happening, let's start with a discussion of the relationship between elections and democracy. Athenian democrats devised their democratic system without elections because they believed that elections are the oligarchic method of selecting the leaders, and mechanisms

that prevent the formation a political class (like the lottery and rotation systems) are the only democratic ways to select the rulers. Because, Athenian democrats believed that elections not only have an intrinsic class bias, but elections also provide the rulers autonomy from the ruled; that is, they make it possible for rulers to be able to do whatever they please. Indeed, the only reason why modern liberal representative government centered around elections is not simply an oligarchic system is because it is also a system that provides tools for the ruled, including methods of participation other than elections, freedoms for the opposition, and checks on the rulers. Although these tools are still severely inadequate, they do make it more challenging for the rulers to do whatever

they wish and they do force rulers to respond to citizens to an extent. However, if elections start to become the only institution of a modern representative government, then elections merely become a tool for authoritarian rule by bolstering the executive branch with popular approval.

The historic demonstrations centered around the resistance in Istanbul's Gezi park is exactly about the grievances caused by the dictatorship of an executive branch that is reinforced by the electoral approval. Specifically, Gezi park resistance is one those instances where both the class character of the state and the oligarchic nature of electoral authorization became blatantly obvious. Firstly, it signifies the class character of the state in a way that will not escape even the most crude Marxist analysis. Gezi is a public park at the political and social epicenter of the city, Taksim, and the government decided to replace the park with a shopping mall. When activists started to resist by not evacuating the park, the government sent in its police to fight for the conversion of a public park into a mall. To put it even more bluntly, the state blindly used its instruments of violence to serve the interests of capital, and to covert a collective good into



private property. However, Gezi also demonstrates the oligarchic character of a political regime based solely on electoral authorization. Because, in the 2011 elections, nobody voted for the government to convert the public park in Taksim into a mall or any of the other governments incursions into the social sphere, yet short of specific mandates, and clear instructions on how to rule, the government had the legal right to rule as it pleases. However, despite their electoral mandate, this type of unilateral action may not have happened in a better functioning representative system which provides the ruled with other instruments of participation and opposition than elections. Because, even though its

democratic content is limited, in a liberal representative government citizens would have some access to policy making, there would be a level of transparency and free public

debate, and there would be legal scrutiny over the issue. In Turkey on the other hand, no such limits are in place given the AKP's unprecedented accumulation of power since 2007.

The AKP has now not only eliminated the well-known historical challenge from the army, but it has also taken control of the high courts, and then slowly but surely, using its popularity, eradicated all oppositional freedoms. Concretely speaking, Erdogan's policy could not be confronted by the non-existing oppositional media, and it could not be challenged by the judiciary that is now under the control of the executive, i.e. the ruling party. Therefore, when Erdogan wanted to turn a public space, where citizens can engage in free and equal interactions, into a right-wing conservative space, where customers focus on the acquisition of goods, there were no other way to stop him except by the force of numbers.

However, the hundreds of thousands of people out protesting are not resisting the police and subjecting themselves to

the massive use of tear gas and brute force just because of the injustice at Gezi park, or just because of the fact that Erdogan is an authoritarian leader. These protests happened because in addition to Erdogan's on-going attacks on oppositional groups (seculars, Alewives, Kurds, socialists and others), including purging them from positions of power, and criminalizing and imprisoning them en masse for various reasons, he deepened to an unprecedented extent his neoliberal and extremely conservative exclusionary social policies. To name a few of the most recent ones, last year, without much debate, the whole education system was reconfigured to

better serve not only the needs of capital but also in Erdogan's words, 'to raise a more religious generation'. Last month, in a country where per capita

alcohol consumption is by far the lowest among OECD countries, strict alcohol consumption restrictions passed, which were defended by Erdogan as follows: 'why is it defensible for you to accept a law passed by two drunkards [according to many signifying Ataturk and Inonu], but the law that is the imperative of religion becomes something that you need to deny...if you want to drink, buy your drink and go drink it in your own home'. Last week, the AKP enlarged its assault on women rights by making the morning after pill a prescription drug, and a couple of days ago Erdogan later approved of an announcement made in Ankara metro warning against kissing in public. Many of these regulations would be very difficult to implement if previously existing checks were still place. For example, the constitutional court might strike a few of the legal changes, or the council of the state would limit or remove some of the others. Considering the lack of avenues for voice and the lack of obstacles against Erdogan's power, these and many other similar policies, combined

with his symbolically exclusionary and suffocating speeches, have apparently made a great many non-supporters feel not only completely powerless and frustrated, but also very angry.

This anger has now become embodied in massive demonstrations, where hundreds of thousands of people are taking back the autonomy that the government enjoys. In short, if the reason for the rebellion is the sense of powerlessness, lack of control over their own lives, the immediate result is perhaps the sense of power large sectors of the population are enjoying for the first time. For now, they have taken control of their city and of their lives. As a result, we are now part of a truly democratic moment. This is an experience that goes way beyond the 'democratic rights' enjoyed within liberal representative democracies, which at its best is a democracy tamed for the requirements of capitalism and the modern state. Therefore, in a counter-intuitive way, we probably owe this democratic explosion to the lack of democratic checks on the power of the electorally authorized executive. For Erdogan, on the other hand, before our very eyes we are witnessing the transformation of his image from a leader who is powerful, popular, and if a little impulsive, still reflective of the values of the 'Turkish nation', into a tyrant who is so greedy and drunk with power that although he has the votes, he cannot manage the country effectively anymore. He is indeed trapped in a dictatorial dilemma: if he caves into the current demands, he will lose the perception that he is all that powerful; if he does not cave in at all, he will have to rely on coercive power to the degree that he will turn into a cruel tyrant. So far he has taken the second route, still belittling and criminalizing the demonstrators, hoping that the next elections in less than a year will result in a way to dissipate the democratic euphoria. However, although this is one of those instances where the statement that 'politics is open-ended' is indeed the reality, it appears that sustained mobilization is the only course of action that will help satisfy both democratic and socialist goals.

*[Yunus Sözen, who wrote this, is a member of Antikapitalist Eylem (Anticapitalist Action) in Turkey. This article first appeared at: [www.internationalviewpoint.org](http://www.internationalviewpoint.org)]*

# Freedom for Palestine: Challenges and Strategies



Rashid Khalidi

**Khalidi's further argues that on the Palestine question the US is not a neutral broker, as many of us have long argued. On other issues the US treats Israel as a normal (if favoured state), but on the Palestine question there can be no 'day-light', as many US politicians argue, between US and Israeli positions.**

Therefore the US needs to step away from the negotiating table, but for this to happen it is up to the Arab nations. As Khalidi argued it is Europe, not the US, which suffers the most from the Middle East's instability and the resulting emigration, terrorism and oil-shocks (along with East Asia). Therefore the Arab states need to stop going to Europe and East Asia as if begging for a handout, but instead present themselves as crucial players in these regions and advocate for Palestine from a position as equals.

The central tenet of Khalidi's talk, however, is that before a change in the US, Europe or East Asia can ever be imagined, change will have to come to the Arab States, including Palestine. Khalidi talks about the pilgrimage of Arab diplomats to Washington, who there visit the key sites, grab a photo-op and then fly back home. In contrast, he observes, one cannot go a single day in the US without an Israeli politician or spokesman appearing on university campuses or in the media advocating for Israel. Every day US newspapers and

media outlets are bombarded by lobbyists and PR firms promoting stories, spokesman and talking points, making sure that the Israeli state perspective is always being heard. On the Arab side there is nothing. There is no common narrative and no PR firms, and no one picking up the phone each day and suggesting an Arab spokesman or a news story from an Arab perspective. Back in Israel, nearly all major politicians are greeted each morning with translated excerpts from the Arab press concerning Israel. He argues that if Arab leaders ever got around to seriously following

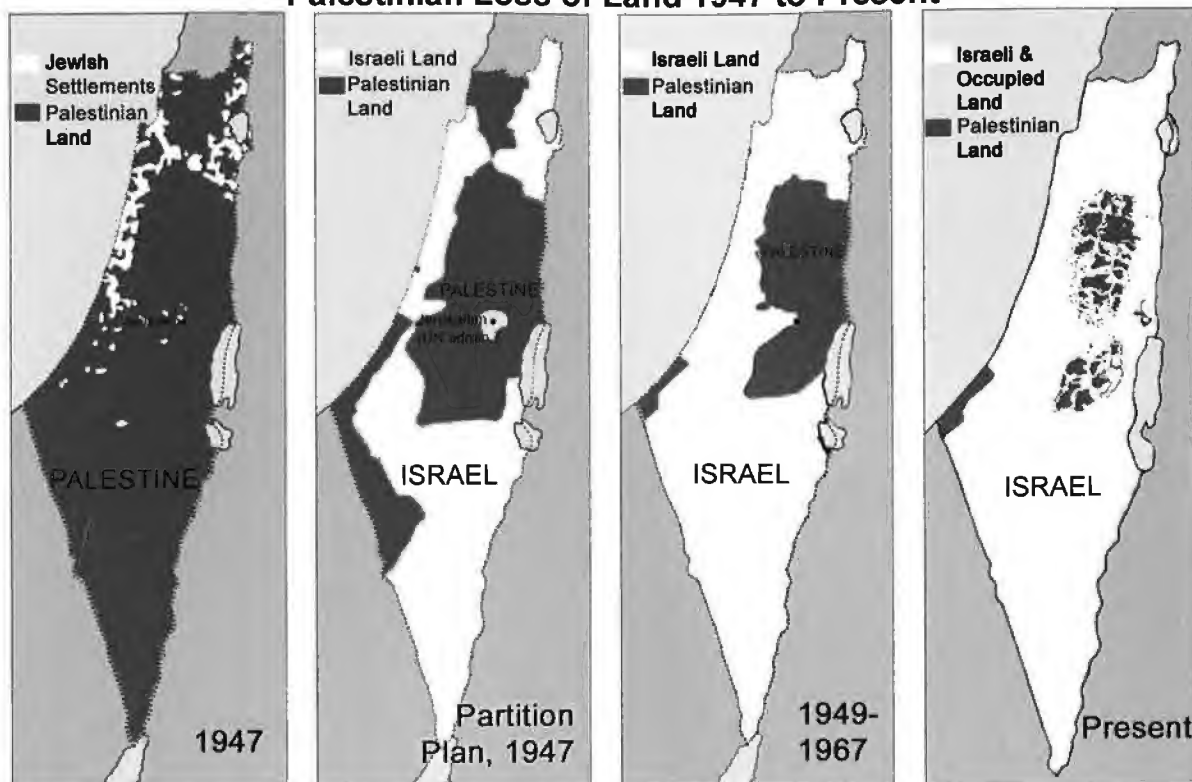
the Hebrew press they would know of the dominance of Revisionist Zionism not only within the Likud Party, but in all Israeli discussion of the Palestine Question. If they knew this they might also begin to grasp the true limits of the Israeli negotiating position. But of course such changes will also rely on a convergence of the popular will of Arab peoples, with that of their leaders, a process presently under way.

In regards to the Palestinian leadership, Khalidi contends, these leaders have grossly let down their people and the division of the Palestinian National Authorities (PNA) of the West Bank from Gaza is a further travesty by these leaders. The PNA was established in 1994 as a temporary body, meant to expire in 1999, and as Khalidi aptly states was a body "born in sin."



## Palestinian National Authority?

Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present



The PNA was conceived as a way for the Israeli occupation to police their Palestinian subjects using Palestinian police. The job for Palestinians today, Khalidi advocates, is to devise a way to maintain funding for the social services of the PNA, while discarding its occupation functions and consequently much foreign aid as well as taxes collected on its behalf by Israel. In later questions Khalidi talked about the possible need for a new PLO and also dealt with the question of resistance. For Khalidi non-violence was essential, as he compared the victorious, non-violent first intifada, to the violent and disastrous second intifada. For him also, debate over the tactical merits of violence by Hamas versus the pragmatic diplomacy of Fatah was a distraction, as neither did much of either. He spoke briefly about continuing non-violent resistance along the Israeli occupation fence, but argued that for this to start imposing serious costs on the occupation it had to expand dramatically.

At the end, Khalidi replied to several questioners on the one state/two state solution debate. This has become a contentious point, within and outside the region, as individuals and organizations argue over whether a single bi-national state or two separate national states are possible. While often suspicious of those who downplay the importance of theoretical debate, I myself agree with Khalidi's view that be it "one state, two state or eleven states" any solution is impossible unless one deals with the preconditions as outlined in his speech. For Khalidi, debating how many states "can balance on the head of a pin," does not change the fact that Palestinians, Arabs and supporters of Palestine need to start creating long-term strategies, of ten years or more, if they want to see any solution in the future. In the US this means building campaigns on campuses and in the media to move public opinion and start winning over congress people one at a time. In the Arab world it means popular pressure and political change so leaders begin to utilise their energy leverage in Europe

and East Asia to build support for the Palestinian cause. Such support is essential if Palestinian's hope to push the US out of the centre of future negotiations. For the people in Palestine it means national campaigns to inflict costs on the Israeli occupation, alongside efforts to overhaul the nation's leadership.

Khalidi's lecture raised important challenges for the pro-Palestine movement, and advocated a redirecting of this campaign. While advocating change through existing power structures, he has no illusions about the limitations of the US, the PNA or Arab states. What he provides is a more realistic strategy and timeline if one hopes to change the status quo for Palestine. I would add in conclusion that for those outside the US and the Arab world, the strategy must be continual campaigning in support of the Palestinian cause and in support of the wider Arab movements for freedom and democracy.

*The author, Sam Campbell, is a socialist from Aotearoa currently working and studying in Lebanon.*



# Freedom for Palestine: Challenges and Strategies

**For those who support the Palestinian cause the name Rashid Khalidi is an important name to know. The Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University, and a former advisor to the Palestinian delegations to Madrid and Washington, Khalidi is one of the most well published living advocates for the Palestinian cause.**

On Wednesday, May 29, at Columbia's Middle East Centre in Amman Khalidi presented the Edward Said memorial lecture, marking ten years since Said's passing, entitled "Preconditions for a Just Resolution of the Palestine Question."

Khalidi lectured with the backdrop of US Secretary of State John Kerry's visit to the World Economic Forum in Jordan days before. Here Kerry unveiled an economic plan to remedy the Palestine question which he intended to be

"different from anything ever seen before." As Khalidi swiftly pointed out, not a single element of this plan is new at all, and is in fact a rehash of numerous US plans proposed over the last three decades. In Khalidi's opinion four of the last five US presidents have tried to find a solution to the Palestine question, as is Obama, but simply looking at the president alone ignores the overarching systemic constraints on US policy towards Palestine. Support in the congress, industry, media and among the public, means that no US president can change policy unilaterally and therefore supporters of Palestine need to prepare for a wider and longer campaign.

**Continued on page 22...**